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SIPDIS

FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

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SUBJECT: UNESCO SCIENCE SECTOR LAUNCHES CAPACITY
BUILDING UNIT

1. SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: SINCE THE U.S. RE-ENTRY, USDEL HAS ENCOURAGED UNESCO TO ASSUME A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN PROMOTING CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. THIS STRATEGY HAS MET WITH SUCCESS. IN A LETTER TO AMBASSADOR OLIVER, UNESCO NATURAL SCIENCES SECTOR DIRECTOR ERDELEN ANNOUNCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEDICATED UNIT WITHIN HIS SECTOR TO COORDINATE CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES.

2. The letter followed the successive missions of two sets of American consultants, who worked closely with UNESCO science sector experts. The consultants recommended a cross-sector program (to include the Science, Education and Communication and Information sectors) that would strengthen and coordinate capacity building activities in the basic sciences, hydrology, and engineering.

3. Erdelen's letter notes correctly that a capacity building program coordinated across UNESCO's sectors would need to be approved by the governing bodies of UNESCO. To that end, USDEL intends to submit a resolution to the 171st Executive Board supporting cross-sector capacity building programs. Given the support expressed by member states for results-oriented capacity building programs -- particularly in the context of UNESCO's lead role in the Decade of Education for Sustainable development -- we expect to welcome many co-sponsors. End Summary and Introduction.

TEXT of LETTER

4. Dear Ambassador Oliver, Following our most recent meeting, the Natural Sciences Sector (SC) proposed a major reorganization within the context of the 33 c/5 (nb BUDGET EXERCISE). This reorganization has now been approved. I am pleased to inform you that capacity building is officially recognized within it.

5. I thank you for your efforts to enhance Capacity building at UNESCO. We share a strong interest in increasing capacity building and science education, and I hope that this is just the beginning of a long collaboration. I have carefully read the report "Capacity Building at UNESCO" (NB prepared by American consultants) with keen interest and will continue to use it for our internal planning. I envision some of the suggested elements as part of a long-term strategy.

6. I appreciate the material on the mandates for Capacity Building both within the UN system and within UNESCO (nb contained in the consultants' study), and it is extremely useful to have an external review of some of our current activities in the area of capacity building. This clarified for me how complex the subject is within UNESCO, and led me to think further how the Science Sector should proceed both within the current biennium (NB budget exercise) and into the next one, in particular in view of the medium term strategy.

7. I believe it would be useful in the longer term for UNESCO to provide for a dedicated unit to monitor and coordinate capacity building activities in all five sectors, as indeed, capacity building is undertaken in them all. However, that is a decision to be proposed and taken by the member states through the governing bodies of UNESCO. In the immediate term, I envision enhancing the coordination of capacity building activities within the Science Sector and to the extent possible, of activities foreseen in joint activities with other sectors, notably the Education and Communication and Information sectors. As the consultants highlighted, every division within the Science Sector has some capacity building activity. What is needed is to see where there are synergies and overlaps between the activities in the Science Sector.

8. Based on these discussions, the Science Sector proposed that a unit on "capacity building and science and engineering education" be created in the next biennium - if not earlier - within the Division of

basic and Engineering Sciences. As mentioned above, I am pleased that the Director General agreed with this proposal. This development is the start of the Science Sector's renewed focus on capacity building. I look forward to working with you as the Science Sector moves forward. Yours Sincerely, Walter Erdelen.
End text of letter.

Oliver